



Summer 2009

# Lake Times

J. Strom Thurmond, Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



## A BOATING WE WILL GO ...

By Jay Weidman, Park Ranger

Boaters who were around in 1989 will remember when the drought was responsible for dropping Thurmond Lake levels to a record setting 312.79 feet mean sea level (ft-msl). That's about a foot-and-a-half lower than we've seen this time around! During that 1989 drought, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers improved and extended many boat ramps around the lake.

The Corps of Engineers has again taken advantage of the opportunity to repair, extend, and clean years of siltation from many ramps around the lake. It's the kind of work that can only be done when the lake is really low, so the chance has been used to the fullest. These improvements will significantly improve boater access to the lake if drought conditions reoccur in the future.

Repairs have been completed at Mt. Carmel Day Use, Rousseau Creek, Dordon Creek, Mt. Pleasant, and Cherokee Recreation Areas.

Ramps that have been extended include Amity, Chamberlin Ferry, Leroy's Ferry, Doubles Branches, Modoc Campground, and Cherokee Recreation Area.

An additional lane has been added to the Modoc Day Use ramp at the end of Gilchrist Ferry Road.

In addition to Corps of Engineers' improvements, Mistletoe State Park has relocated and extended their low water boat ramp. Columbia County has extended ramp number 2 in the Winfield Hills Subdivision. Also, McCormick County has extended two lanes at the Dorn Fishing Facility and now has the second deepest ramp on the lake, after Leathersville.



**For a list of ramps and ramp elevations, check our web site at  
[www.sas.usace.army.mil/lakes/thurmond/boating.htm](http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/lakes/thurmond/boating.htm)**

**Boat safe and don't forget to wear your lifejacket!**



# Exploring Science in the Great Outdoors

By Susan Boyd,  
Project Environmental Coordinator

Each May, middle school students from the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) compete for the title of Middle School Eco-Meet Champions. The CSRA Environmental Science Education Cooperative (ESEC), an organization of 26 federal, state and local agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses and universities, hosted the annual event to promote environmental science education in a fun, hands-on learning environment.

The 10th Annual Middle School Eco-Meet Competition was held May 1, 2009 at the Georgia Forestry Commission's Spirit Creek Education Forest in Hephzibah, Georgia. This rain or shine event, hosted by a different ESEC member each year, offered students and teachers an opportunity to explore the various outdoor educational venues in the CSRA.

The J. Strom Thurmond Project has participated in this annual event since hosting the event in 2005. This year, the JST Project presented a station to test students' knowledge regarding threatened and endangered species found in the CSRA. Other ESEC members hosting test stations included the Fort Gordon Environmental Section, National Wild Turkey Federation, Watson Brown Foundation, Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy – Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, Silver Bluff Audubon Center and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

Participants included teams from many local schools, as well as schools as far away as Wrens, Ga., and Greenwood, SC. Up to 120 area students participated in team competitions that involved testing their environmental and science knowledge at hands-on stations focusing on a range of topics, from weather, air quality and watersheds to endangered species and wildlife. Following a fun day of matching wits against fellow students, teams were awarded medals and prizes, as well as the bragging rights for third, second and first place overall.



*Local Middle School students answer Eco-meet test questions about forest ecology and wetlands*

## Orange in the Trees ... And its Not Even Fall Yet.

By Randy Waters, Park Ranger

You may have noticed orange paint markings/blazes/bands on trees when leaving private land to go onto public land at Thurmond Lake. These markings are of particular interest to private property owners or folks who are looking to purchase property bordering these public lands. Contrary to what some folks think, the markings are not the exact boundary line between the properties but simply "witness" trees indicating the boundary line is located nearby. Anyone who is considering building a house, wood deck, garage, etc., near the boundary line should pay particular attention to these tree markings. It is very important to ensure that such structures are not placed on public land. Imagine how you would feel if your neighbor decided, without your permission, to place his tool shed over on your property? Prior to any construction activity near the US Army Corps of Engineers boundary line, we recommend, at a minimum, the following be done: 1) check all county setback ordinances for the county you live in prior to construction; and, 2) contact a licensed surveyor if you will need to know exactly where the boundary line is should your activities require it.



*The most common witness tree. Two horizontal bands face the boundary line. Only trees within 30 inches of the boundary line are marked.*

The tree markings also assist others in the general public who hunt, fish, etc., on public lands. The orange paint warns them that the boundary line is nearby and going beyond the markings could result in trespassing onto private lands.

For further information on the Thurmond Project contact the project office at 1-800-533-3478.



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# It's Been a While ... It Really Has ...

By Jay Weidman, Park Ranger

Seems like forever since you've had your boat out on the lake. With all the low water and high gas prices, boating hasn't looked too attractive the last couple of years.

This summer, gas prices are pretty reasonable, and the lake, while still around three to four-feet low, is significantly improved over the sixteen-foot low it was over the winter. The economy is squeezing the vacation budget pretty tight, so staying close to home and going to the lake is looking like a good option for some economical sun and fun over the summer.

Just remember, those sharp boat handling skills have likely deteriorated; rules of the road are just dim memories, and a host of other boating skills have almost certainly taken flight. If you're rusty from not being on the water much, is your boat any better?

Before heading out, take a serious look at your boat, trailer, trailer tires, boat motor, steering cables, and fuel lines. Closely go over your boat. Is all of your safety equipment ready to go after a long time collecting dust and spider webs? Check the charge on your fire extinguisher, the condition of your life jackets and other safety equipment. You might be unpleasantly surprised! Better now than out on the lake. In the event of an emergency they're the only things between you and catastrophe.

If you want to improve your boating knowledge, take an approved boating safety course. Throughout the summer, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the Corps of Engineers at Thurmond Lake will be offering a one-day family boating course titled "ABOUT BOATING SAFETY". Completion of the course satisfies both Georgia and South Carolina state boating requirements, including the operation of personal water craft (jet skis) by your children. Many insurance companies offer a discount for successfully completing the course.

The cost is \$35.00 for an individual and \$50.00 for a family. Call or E-mail John VanOsdol at 864-391-2170 or [johnvanosdol@wcetel.net](mailto:johnvanosdol@wcetel.net) or Jay Weidman at 800-533-3478, ext. 1172 or [john.c.weidman@usace.army.mil](mailto:john.c.weidman@usace.army.mil) for information and dates.



## Water Safety Awareness

By David Hatfield, Park Ranger

We appreciate your cooperation in improving public safety on the J. Strom Thurmond Lake. Park Rangers with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers can't emphasize enough the importance of wearing a life jacket. Boaters are willing to wear life jackets riding to and from their favorite spots. But, they don't think about wearing life jackets when fishing, using the boat ramp or swimming. Yet, we have seen accidents occur where boaters have slipped launching their boat, fallen overboard fishing, or swimmers who have decided to swim across a cove out to a buoy or a nearby shoal, and have drown. Pop-up thunderstorms often create large waves and invite the curious which can often be fatal. It's always best to allow the waves to calm prior to going back into the water. A life jacket loaner program is in place in West Dam Recreation Area near the group shelter for people who do not have one or the one they have doesn't fit properly.

### Swimming tips.

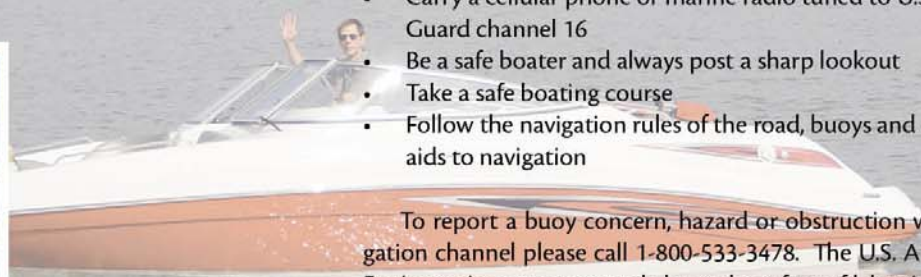
- Never rely on toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat
- Don't take chances by overestimating your swimming skills
- Swim only in designated swimming areas
- Never swim alone
- Keep a watchful eye on children at all times

Boats and other watercraft are restricted around designated swimming areas. Each Corps beach has two "Boats Keep Out" buoys located about 100 feet from the swimming area buoy lines. All water inside the buoys means no boats or personal watercraft are allowed in or around the swimming area or on the beach. This area will be patrolled and rules are strictly enforced by Corps of Engineer Park Rangers, Columbia County Sheriff's Department, Georgia and South Carolina Officers from the Department of Natural Resources.

### Boating Safety.

- Check the weather forecast
- Plan your trip with friends or neighbors so that someone will know your whereabouts
- Check your boat for required safety equipment
- Check your electrical system and fuel system for gas fumes
- Follow manufacturer's suggested operational procedures
- Carry a cellular phone or marine radio tuned to U.S. Coast Guard channel 16
- Be a safe boater and always post a sharp lookout
- Take a safe boating course
- Follow the navigation rules of the road, buoys and other aids to navigation

To report a buoy concern, hazard or obstruction within a navigation channel please call 1-800-533-3478. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is very concerned about the safety of lake visitors and encourages everyone to be safety conscious.







## Better Habitat ... Better Fishing

By Jaime Sykes,  
Savannah District Fisheries Biologist

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District has begun construction of a new dissolved oxygen injection system in J. Strom Thurmond Lake to improve fish habitat. Located near Modoc, SC, the system will consist of oxygen storage tanks, vaporizers, and associated underwater oxygen diffusers. In addition, as part of the project, the Modoc 7 boat ramp will be upgraded to include paved parking and a restroom facility.

When completed, the system will provide at least one-mile of cool water habitat that contains at least 5 mg/l of dissolved oxygen. This will represent a dramatic increase in summer habitat for striped bass in the lower portion of the J. Strom Thurmond Lake.

Currently, good quality striped bass habitat is limited to the area immediately below the Richard B. Russell Dam. Due to concerns about impacts to the habitat in the Russell Dam area associated with pumped storage, the Corps of Engineers agreed to build this new system near Modoc. The system will use liquid oxygen that is converted to gas before being injected into the lake through a series of long pipes called diffusers. The system will only operate during the summer months when warm water temperatures and low dissolved oxygen conditions limit the portions of the lake striped bass can inhabit.

Construction on the access road to the site and on the boat ramp parking area has already started. The scheduled completion date for the entire system is Summer 2011.



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